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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates how the sociolinguistic concept of code switching applies to the use of different styles of music. The two bases for the analogy are Labov's definition of code-switching as "moving from one consistent set of co-occurring rules to another," and the finding of sociolinguistics that code switching tends to be part of communicative strategy. At least two types of codes or styles seem to exist in music, diachronic and synchronic. Diachronic style pools exist in both classical and contemporary popular music. In many current sound recordings, both the past and present styles of music are incorporated in the same piece. Performers of contemporary music have to alternate styles to suite their audience. Another mode of code-switching is the superimposition of two sets of words on the same musical score. Three types of "ethnic code-switching" are apparently close to the concern of sociolinguistics. These are: (1) accomodation of the music to ethnically mixed audiences; (2) accomodating a minority culture's traditions to a mainstream musical piece; and (3) musical change brought about by contact between cultures. While many questions are left untouched, it is indicated that the analogies could lead to joint exploration of musical material by both ethnomusicology and sociolinguistics. (AMH)

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CODE SWITCHING AND CODE SUPERIMPOSITION IN MUSIC[1]

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The contact between the large fields of linguistics and musicology has often been based on the nearly impossible attempts of some scholars to apply the models of structural linguistics to musical data. As most observers have noticed, the bulk of these enterprises simply doesn't work, for some basic reasons: lack of linguistic background on the part of ethnomusicologists; the assumption that models can be lifted bodily across disciplinary boundaries; lack of selectivity in adapting terminology from one discipline to another, and other such methodological problems.[2]

Failures notwithstanding, it does seem intuitively that there are good reasons for trying to link linguistics and (ethno)musicology at the structural level. However, it makes at least as much sense to look at the contextual level. After all, nearly every definition of ethnomusicology includes, however grudgingly, the phrase "music in culture," or "music as a part of human behavior," etc. Surely the branch of linguistics that deals with language in culture, or as part of the ethnography of speaking, appears to have a very natural connection to ethnomusicology.[3] The very fact of both sociolinguistics and ethnomusicology being rather new, hybrid, and made up of people trained in a variety of fields should make them kissing cousins in the family of academe.

Indeed, in the 1970's several sociolinguists began to note the similarities. Hymes (1974:443) even thinks that "musical terminology will prove a great resource for exploration of speech styles." Reisman (1974) not only puts Hymes' admonition into practice with a study of "contrapuntal conversations," but points out in the course of analysis how such verbal behavior can dissolve into musical performance, while Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1972:342-6) actually introduce songs as material in an extended study of Jewish immigrant narrative behavior.

The present brief paper does not intend to cover the vast range of problems that could be mutually tackled by sociolinguistics and ethnomusicology, nor will I show how "models" from one field can be applied to the other. It

has always struck me that interdisciplinary work should involve the making of analogies, rather than the imitation of full-blown methdological or theoretical structures. As mentioned earlier in connection with misguided linguistic-based work in ethnomusicology, it is always dangerous to borrow from a field in which one has not been intellectually born and bred. In short, I would like to illustrate how the sociolinguistic concept of code switching got me to thinking about analogous situations in a great variety of world musical traditions. Just as code switching in language is a cross-culturally valid methodological insight, I think it can function similarly for music. The following descriptions are simply meant as introductory suggestions towards defining and ordering world musical code switching and what I will call code superimposition. More rigorous definitions and typologies will have to flow from future research.

For code switching, I would like to use Labov's definition of "moving from one consistent set of co-occurring rules to another" (Labov 1972:134-5). The second part of my base for analogy is the finding of sociolinguistics that code switching tends to be part of communicative strategy. Paper after paper cites the fact that the "social use of language" is "not rigidly determined by the institutional structure of the society, but rather largely created in performance by the strategic and goal-directed manipulation of resources for speaking" (Bauman & Sherzer 1974:8). To make my analogy, then, I need to decide what a musical code is, and then to locate situations in which it can be demonstrated that performers swithc such codes as part of musical strategy. This boils down to the questions of whether musicians carry more than one set of rules simultaneously and whether and why they choose to move from one to another in the course of a single performance.

It must also be assumed that normal carriers of the music culture can distinguish the varied codes as part of their competence. I am not yet sure whether the case is as clear for music as it apparently is for speech; according to Zentella (n.d.:1) "sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic research have indicated that a single style speaker is an anomaly " Nevertheless, we do know in broad terms that musicians generate audible music from sets of consistent rules to produce something listeners identify as appropriate. The work of ethnomusicologists (as well as everyday observations one can make watching television) makes us aware that many, though certainly not all, musicians have more than one such code available, whether in terms of musical

"languages," "dialects," "levels," or "styles." For present purposes, I would like to use what we commonly term musical "style" as the analogy to linguistic code.

Here we stumble a bit into the problems of cross-disciplinary use of terms, since musical style, as usually used, does not eactly overlap the sense of "style" just cited from Zentella, a sociolinguist.[4] Yet to the extent that both are usable as synonyms for the "sets of consistent rules" Labov defines we can fairly employ the equation code=style for music.

Of course, by limiting the discussion to style, we omit a wide range of musical parameters that could equally well be considered codes that can be, and at times are, switched during performance: rules of behavior, dress, performer-listener relationship, a whole range of aspects relating to physical setting, and so on. All these channels of music-dominated communication could be fruitfully investigated as multiple, simulatenous codes that are flexibly and subtly used by performers to make their artistic and cultural points, and which form a major part of musician-audience interaction. I am aware that sociolinguistics are also interested in the limitations of the older methods of analysis. Work such as Tedlock's (1972) leads Hymes (1974: 441) to point out "stylistic modes," certain variables of speech which give it its affective charge. These features may be integral to performance and form part of a multi-channeled event to which kinetic and other factors would have to be added to produce a truly well-rounded analysis. Here sociolinguistics and ethnomusicology come very close in their potential areas of interest

Now, to posit musical code switching is to assume situations in which there is a rich set of musical means available. There seem to be two types of style pools, each with its own particular cultural resonance and musical manifestation: diachronic and synchronic. A diachronic style pool arises due to the historical accretion of style: music cultures tend to build up strata of rules. We know this from Western historical training, in which classical music (or art history) is conventionally described as falling into, say, a "Baroque" period preceded by a "Renaissance" era and succeeded by a "Classic" age. Such diachronic style pools can then be used by performers for a variety of purposes. I would like to illustrate their use in two situations in Western music in 1979, one "classical" and one "popular."

Diachronic code switching in classical music, while evident in earlier centuries (e.g. Mozart's use of different styles for two ladies of different

generations in "Don Giovanni"), becomes endemic--even epidemic--in the twentieth century as a part of modernism. Andrew Porter, a most subtle music critic, recently reflected at length on this phenomenon while reviewing works of George Rochberg, a composer particularly given to diachronic musical code switching. Porter notes that Rochberg has said that "we are filaments of a universal mind; we dream each other's dreams and those of our ancestors," and adds: "I respond to the thought" (Porter 1979:110). Equally strong is the statement by Bernd Alois Zimmerman, whom Porter calls "the master of collage composition," who described a work made up of Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, and Messiaen as "a dream association between the past and present epochs of music which surround us daily...a microfilm of the card index of our consciousness." (ibid.) Porter's support of the code switching enterprise is explicit: "...I respect a creator who genuinely feels that clothes of the past are more comfortable and more expressive garments than those of today" (Porter 1979:115).

In part, Zimmerman's statement reflects the impact of prevalent sound recordings, which allow both the past and the present to "surround us daily." Indeed, a whole complex of ethnomusiciological questions are raised by the statements of both composers and critics here which cannot be commented on in this brief paper. Knowing the artistic crises of the twentieth century and parallel developments in other arts and literature, readers should be able to draw their own conclusions. It should be noted, however, that despite the frequent exhortations of the late, much lamented Charles Seeger that ethnomusicologists turn their trained gaze on western art music, most of us have ignored the invitation.

A very different type of diachronic style pool exists in the world of contemporary popular music. I would like to cite the current research of a Wesleyan doctoral candidate, Bruce MacLeod, whose dissertation is a pioneer work on what are called "club-date" musicians, i.e. those who perform at events such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, and corporate parties. It is clear from MacLeod's extensive interviews with band leaders and sidemen in the New York metropolitan area that the advent of rock n' roll drastically transformed the club-date business, resulting in a diachronic layering that has musical, sociological, and economic implications. Every event must present both musical codes (the older dance music and rock), with the switches carefully defined in the context of the evening's entertainment, including

a change-over of personnel. Only certain types of young "rockers" have the savvy, gear, and knowlege of repertoire to carry off the performance of the newer layer. Several aspects of their hiring, payment, and intra-group relationships differ markedly from the traditional modes of organization, which may at times be resented by the older players.

At present, it appears that even newer layers of rock, leading to disco, are building up. The resulting economic and technological difficulties, according to MacLeod, threaten the very existence of the club-date business. Interestingly a similar, though not so advanced, case of layering due to rock is reported in another Wesleyan dissertation in progress, by James Kimball, whose work in rural Poland indicates conscious code switching, with attendant social and economic resonance, between older and rock styles. One might expect this musical situation in itself to be a fairly widespread world phenomenon, worth investigating as an important contemporary form of diachronic code layering and switching.

Synchronic style pools can, of course, include situations just described; after all, it is the simultaneous existence of the historical codes that enables them to be switched. However, the basis of what I call synchronic style pools is sufficiently different in most cases to warrant the use of two terms. Synchronic pools tend not to be perceived as historically-differentiated styles, but tend rather to represent the relationships of the mainstream culture to sub-cultures, or of ethnic groups to each other, factors not immediately relevant to the diachronic examples adduced above.

Before turning to examples illustrative of synchronic code switching, I must briefly note the factor of code superimposition. This is a process whereby codes are layered at one and the same moment of performance. Such situations occur commonly in songs, where language and music have been temporarily coupled to produce a single culturally recognizable musical unit. If the two are jiggled so as to create a misalliance, the juxtaposition of codes produces an effect similar to that of code switching. Here a homespun example familiar to most American readers will suffice. The opening of "The Star-Spangled Banner" can be sung in two different ways: 1) "O say can you see by the dawn's early light;" 2) "O say can you see any bedbugs on me," the latter being a traditional children's rendition. Clearly, two codes have been superimposed here, much like the old photographer's trick of having the subject put his head into a cut-out of a donkey.

It is unclear to me to what extent such code superimposition might exist in language as well, though Hymes' "stylistic modes" seem to point in that direction. I imagine that reading a message couched in formal style in a deliberately colloquial or satirical way probably constitutes code superimposition. My own scanty background in sociolinguistics does not indicate that it is a topic of much interest to sociolinguists, and my instinct is to state that is is a subject of mere interest to musical, than to strictly verbal, performance contexts; I would certainly appreciate enlightenment on this point.

One more factor has to be set into place before introducing a final set of examples: intent. Unless the performer and his/her audience are conscious of the code switch or superimposition involved, it would be extremely academic of us to be interested in the phenomenon. Unlike the unconscious, if strategic, quality of code switching often observed by sociolinguistis, the corresponding musical practice can often be quite deliberately applied and understood. Though I would not rule out cases of routine or unnoticed change, they seem less interesting from the point of view of understanding music in culture. It may well be that I will stumble into the intentional fallacy here by assuming that if musicians do something, they have a good and conscious reason for it. Yet the weight of evidence on the cultural significance of music makes it less than circular to argue that if people move from one style to another or superimpose styles, it can be viewed as meaningful.

Let us return to our earlier look at "The Star-Spangled Banner." The school child's interest in humorously profaning the national anthem is far different from the political violence intended by the rock musician Jimi Hendrix when he played his celebrated Vietnam War version of the same song in 1969. In it he superimposed the sounds of falling bombs and screaming rockets, produced by his electric guitar. His motivation, in turn, is very different from that of the Japanese leftist students of the 1960s (or, say, Yiddish radicals of 1910) who sang the French national anthem, "La Marseillaise," in ther own language. Here the superimposition of a changed linguistic code onto the well-known tune was meant as solidarity with, rather than anger against, the tune's function as political rallying-cry. It can be seen that intention indeed plays a part in such juxtaposition, as it does in code switches.

Viewed cross-culturally, motivation can include a wide range of backgrounds and contexts for a given performance, which must be carefully analyzed case by case. This phenomenon is close to the recent observation of a sociolinguist that "...specific linguistic function and the social meaning of code switching vary in each speech community" (Zentella n.d.:1). In this preliminary report, I have already pointed out the intention of historical commentary implicit in diachronic code switching; this type of switch can have numerous other functions, particularly parody and various shades of nostalgia. In art music, the use of such switching can even be quite ambiguous. For example, it is unclear why, in his Fifth String Quartet, Bela Bartok makes a very sudden code switch. He moves from his usual 1920's, dissonant, agitated style to an older, nineteenth-century sound, marked off from the piece by a stop in the music and the indication "Allegretto con indifferenza," after which the preceding style re-asserts itself. Here parody, irony and nostalgia are mixed in a complex way as the listener is forced to re-evaluate the past in terms of the present, and vice-versa.

In synchronic code switching and superimposition, some of the more common situations include humor (including irony, parody, and satire), ethnic commentary (including accomodation, confrontation, and acculturation) and co-optation by the mainstream (in terms of institutions or commercial interests) of a sub-culture style. There are also some very general motivations involving the performer himself, such as the proof of versatility of repertoire as a mark of excellence. I suspect that many of these motivational factors parallel the intent behind much of the code switching behavior observed by sociolinguists.

For the present I would like to introduce a few examples of the ethnic component in code switching and superimposition, as it appears to me to be a factor quite close to a sociolinguistic area of concern. All three faces--accomodation, confrontation, and acculturation--will be shown; naturally, these are not mutually exclusive categories, so I will try to present fairly straightforward instances.

1. Ethnic accomodation. Elsewhere (Slobin 1976) I have described the inter-ethnic musical contact situation in northern Afghanistan in detail. Let me single out one interesting context for code switching. This takes place in the market towns of the region, where members of a variety of ethnic groups come to a local teahouse on market days to transact business

and entertain themselves. Playing for this ethnically mixed audience, the lute-player often strings together tunes of diverse origin, making code switches as he goes. The intent, essentially, is to satisfy a multi-faceted audience and so to accomodate potentially conflicting ethnic tastes. The musical styles are smoothly coupled, with the performer moving from tune to tune and from one highly distinctive ethnic style to another without missing a beat.

Similar attempts at accomodation can be seen as the stock in trade of various sorts of performers. One thinks here of the Eastern European Gypsy's traditional role as musical middleman to any number of ethnic groups. An interesting borderline case of accomodation occurs within an ethnic group that maintains several styles, some internal and some external. Traditional Eastern European Jewish bands (both in Europe and America) had to move quickly from Yiddish to Ukrainian to Rumanian material, to name just three available codes. Is one to regard this as acculturation or simply accomodation of various factions of the audience with different interests, where personal musical ethnic boundaries may have to do with age, socio-economic status or individual taste?

2. Ethnic confrontation. Here I would like to mention examples from popular music to indicate code switching's ubiquitous quality in music cultures. In this case, it is the subculture of Jewish Americans that is opposed musically to mainstream American culture. The commentary, through its grotesque nature, seems to point out the aggravated nature of immigration through humor. A Yiddish comedy number of the late 1940's called "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" by the Barton Brothers, a talented and now forgotten duo (Fig. 1) begins with a perfectly standard recitation of the eponymous Longfellow poem, accompanied by a trumpet-and-drum rendition of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The diction and dialect of the reciter are straight American, slightly pompous. Suddenly, this American reverie is broken by a brief silence and a highly dramatic code switch to a Jewish dance band playing a Yiddish tune, who accompany a second narrator. He uses a heavy Yiddish intonation and delivers a parody of the American patriotic poem ("Paul Rabinowitz," etc.) in a Yiddish full of English lexical intrusions. A short section of this pattern is followed by a break which introduces the return of the Longfellow, American style. The two components of the performance are alternated in unbroken succession until the entire Longfellow poem has been recited.

Figure 1
"Midnight Ride of Paul Revere"

	A		B	
text	Longfellow poem (stage English)	silence	Yiddish parody (Yiddish, many English intrusions)	→ A, B, etc.
music	"Battle Hymn of the Republic" (trumpet & drum)		E. European Jewish dance band (clarinet)	

Figure 2
"My Coney Ireland Wedding."

text	Irish-accented English narrative		mixed English-Yiddish recitation	----- → A,B,C again
music	Irish melody		Irish melody	E. Eur. Jewish dance tune

This is the sort of structure Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1972:345) refers to, when she contrasts the nature of narrative, which allows considerable room for improvisation, with songs which, as "fixed phrase genres" are "repeated as close to verbatim as possible from one performance to another." She goes on to say that the "free phrase genres of folklore...provide especially valuable data for analyzing the strategic use of speech varieties and code-switching in artistic multilingual communication" (ibid.) At the same time, however, it seems to me that the very stability across performers and repeated performance that marks the stylized multimusical/lingual song makes it an appealing Exhibit A for the preoccupations of the culture being studied. Standardized songs line up nicely as a row of specimens for the purpose of typologies, just as the flow of musical styles indicated in the Afghan code switching example cited above suggests music's narrative-like flexibility in other cases.

One interesting fact about the stable multi-code songs is that they carry across the folk-popular line in the music culture. Thus, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett can comfortably introduce both a folk and a popular song in her discussion of Jewish multilingual songs. This helps in establishing the continuity of values espoused by entertainment. In addition, one of her songs is of Old World origin, while the other is American, with the appropriate linguistic codes being involved for each locale. This carry-over of a pattern of song-making highlights the way a musical communicative strategy can continue to be viable for a minority culture even when whole new codes have to be employed to make the same point.

Let us examine a second example of the same period and subculture, organized in a more complex manner, to see how linguistic and musical codes can be pushed around in varying configurations. Here confrontation between the Jews and the Irish is hinted at in a song entitled "My Coney Ireland Wedding" (sung by Leo Fuchs; Fig. 2). Fuchs begins with an Irish melody, and described his wedding in straight English mentioning, however, Jewish items such as "a small bar mitzvah hall." This is followed by a comic listing of bizarre relatives who interrupt the post-nuptial bliss. Here there is a mixed English and Yiddish text, set to another Irish tune, yielding a fairly complex case of superimposition of codes. The musical plot is then considerably thickened by a quick code switch to the band alone, playing a standard Yiddish dance number before Fuchs returns for the second

verse, which repeats the whole process. The progress from selection A throug C is thus one of slow breaking through of a facade to reveal the true ethnic core, a technique opposed to the block confrontation of Fig. 1.

3. Acculturation. While the preceding items seem to comment on ethnic confrontation, they of course touch upon acculturation as well. Evidence of musical change brought about by contact between cultures is clearly a large area for study, and code switching could play a vital role as data. I will illustrate three quite different types of musical situations involving fairly standard patterns of acculturation that employ musical code switching and superimposition. The first involves immigrant popular music once again. Nearly every group of newcomers to America has evolved diverse acculturated musical styles, almost none of which has been studied. Even recent studies of Euro-American musics tend to stress Old World repertoires and their survival, though the trend is slowly shifting. As an almost random example of acculturation, let us look at Ukrainian-Canadian country music, an enormously popular genre among Canada's third-largest ethnic group. One can hear a standard country tune, e.g., "Please Release Me," performed with Ukrainian-language text, while the musical accompaniment, basically American, has been mildly Ukrainized to include a cimbalom. Thus, an easily identifiable American song has been somewhat acculturated to Ukrainian style through code superimposition, both textual and musical. At the same time, one can view the situation as representing Ukrainian linguistic and musical materials being overlaid by the American sensibility and melody of the song. Popular musical codes like country music offer excellent material for cross-cultural investigation of acculturation, as many ethnic groups in America (including American Indians) may tap the same source for their mixed-code styles, while worldwide diffusion of the repertoire insures ample control cases from outside.

A second example is from another large area of world acculturation, one just hinted at: the evolution of new popular musical styles in Third World countries (here one would have to add the Second World of Eastern Europe and the USSR as well). This is a field of study taken seriously by ethnomusicologists only recently, as they used to spurn any style that seemed non-indigenous or not "authentic." An examination of the pop music of any given country, say Iran, reveals an intricate continuum of older to newer, more indigenous to more outside-influenced styles illustrating

acculturation, and many of the types feature code switching and superimposition. The external inputs are not always simple: not just Western, but Latin American, African, Mediterranean, or Indian sources may be the basis of the diversity of styles. In Iran, many interesting examples abound, such as in songs which feature Persian rhythms laid down as the metric basis, while recently imported instruments (e.g. electric organ), vocal styles, melodic contours, and emotions are unfolded. Complex superimpositions of a variety of codes can create situations where layer-by-layer analysis is needed. In older examples (mid-1960s) one can hear code switching within a single song, where a free-rhythm, traditional Persian vocal style will alternate with a new, imported beat and timbre. One can only wonder what the Iranian pop scene of the post-Shah era will bring.

Some much more flagrant examples of code switching as part of acculturation can be found in the contemporary musics of the peoples of the Soviet Union. An early way of creating indigenous operas in Central Asia, for example, was called the "quotation" or "citation" method by Russian musicologists. Carried out by composers sent from Moscow to places like Tashkent and Alma-Ata, it consisted of well-calculated code switching from European to local styles for which the linguistic notion of a quotation has been very aptly borrowed. The instinctive turning to such a metaphor strengthens my feeling that the process is akin to sociolinguistic developments. In these operas, one can hear a full orchestra play an overture with Western harmony, followed by a solo singer's entry with a purely Kazakh or Uzbek text, voice quality, and melody.

As should be evident by now, it is hard to summarize briefly so rich a topic as musical code switching and superimposition. One would have to define more rigorously all the terms involved and perhaps create other typologies, relating the activity to individual or communal musical needs, to mainstream vs. sub-culture usage, to purely musical vs. music-textual usages, and so on. It should be clear how different the musical data are from sociolinguistic practice, yet I hope that the analogies are apparent that could lead to joint exploration of sung material from both sides of the disciplinary boundary. At least I hope that some indication has been given that music, like the ethnography of speaking, can be viewed as part of the ethnography of communication.

FOOTNOTES

1. A variant of this paper was read at the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (New Delhi, 1978). I regret not being able to reproduce the recorded music examples, which liven up the presentation considerably.

2. I should except here some of the work of Judith and Alton Becker, blessed by being a couple composed of an ethnomusicologist and a linguist.

3. From the point of view of an ethnomusicologist, both "sociolinguistics" and the newer "ethnography of speaking" seem useful sources upon which to draw. I find it hard to distinguish the two, especially as some researchers publish under both headings. The identification of ethnography of speaking as involving shared interests of linguistic anthropologists and folklorists (Bauman & Sherzer 1974:9) makes the field particularly congenial to ethnomusicology. Since this is a working paper in sociolinguistics, I will stick to that term.

4. Once again the outsider tends to bumble. Zentella's use of "style" seems far from Hymes' (1974) when he uses the term in a rather more literary way as an "orientation" or set of preferences, somewhat closer to the traditional musicological sense of the term, which perhaps provides a better bridge to musical style = code.

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CODE SWITCHING AND CODE SUPERIMPOSITION IN MUSIC[1]:

Relevance Statement

The WORKING PAPERS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS have included several papers on the phenomenon of linguistic code switching. Mark Slobin's paper on "Code Switching and Code Superimposition in Music" reminds us that language is only one of many codes employed in human communication, and that sociolinguistics is part of a broader enterprise taking in all forms of communication in social life.

Slobin's analysis represents a creative extension of sociolinguistic concepts and perspectives to a communicative system other than language. Even further, however, in his introduction of the concept of code superimposition, Slobin contributes a new and potentially useful analytical tool to the ethnography of communication, enriching our understanding of the ways in which communicative means may be creatively manipulated in social use. Herein lies the usefulness of Slobin's paper for educators: it heightens our awareness of the continuities between language and other forms of communication, and of the creative potential inherent in the multiplicity of communicative means available to us all as members of culturally heterogeneous communities.